

AT THE GUARDHOUSE

A Barrack Room Love Story...

By P. Y. BLACK

Copyright, 1903, by American Press Association

THE girl looked up at the sky petulantly. She kept in the shadow as much as possible, but the moon tonight was at the full, the sky was nearly cloudless, and thus her errand was rendered the more perilous. It was June, yet far above the small plateau on which the army post was built snow lingered on the silent mountain peaks. These glimmered in the moonlight of a silvery whiteness, illusive and unearthly, as if the great and solemn summits were now, while men slept, the watching place of guardian angels. The mountains leaped suddenly from the plateau, blackly boulder flanked, with depths of dark and lowering woods. In a still deeper black was marked the line of the canyon's descent, where the melting snows of thousands of winters had bitten into the rock with deathless ferocity. At one solitary point upon that linky line the girl noted where the moonbeams gleamed upon a cataract, whose foam sparkled in the light, a diamond set in ebony. Thence the waters tumbled down until, from the roar of rage, their tired voices softened and sank to the querulous babble of the creek as it ran below the bank on which she stood.

The girl delayed cautiously in the shadow of the last house on the creek's side within the limits of the post. At last there fell upon her anxious ears the call of the trumpet at the adjutant's office, almost immediately followed by the bugles at the flagstaff, with the first call for tattoo. She ran to the edge of the shadow, then tripped across the stepping stones and vanished in the woods which covered the island formed by the forking of the stream just above the post.

It stretched a mile in length, of varying breadth. Over its whole surface spread a tangle of thickets and scrubby oaks, so that even by daylight a wanderer would be completely hidden in its recesses from the people of the post. By night a battalion could have scattered over it and remained unsuspected. The girl pushed her way boldly forward, undeterred by the silence of the thickets, the solitude and the darkness. She followed a rough and stony path as if she were certain of her road. Still, when she reached a little spring, which bubbled in a clear space just beside the path, she hesitated, put down the basket she had been carrying on her arm, and bent forward, listening intently; but from the thicket about her no sound came. The girl put her fingers in her mouth like a boy, and from her lips came one long, soft whistling note. A bird sprang from a bush near her and aroused some others by its flight; otherwise there was no response. The girl stamped her foot angrily.

"He has gone without—seeing me," she muttered, and her lip quivered. She picked up the basket and started to go back, when she paused again. From the center of the island there floated through the night the music of a violin. The girl's face instantly changed from anger to relief and joy. She left the path and ran in the direction of the



She snatched away the bow, music. In a minute or two she had reached the player and thrown one arm about his neck, while with the other she snatched away the bow.

"You foolish boy," she whispered, "they will hear you across the creek. Why did you bring the violin anyhow? They will track you all the better if you are seen carrying it."

"Could I go without it?" he asked in surprise. "Did you whistle? What time is it, Katy? Listen—taps."

They were silent, clasping each other's hands until the call ended. The violin player sighed.

"I shall never hear it again," he said, "I hope."

"Well," said the girl practically, "if you don't want to hear the bugles again you must be off at once."

"Not yet, Katy, dear," he said, "Give me the bow, and I will play you a farewell—no, not a farewell, only a song to the time when we will meet again."

The girl shook her head and held the bow away from his reaching hand. The moonlight burst through the leaves above and shone upon them. He was in the army uniform. His cap bore the band's device. He was very young, almost a boy. His form was slight. His smooth face was lit up by two great, faraway, brown eyes. The girl was different. Her willful face was strong,

Her black eyes glowed with passion and purpose. There seemed little in them to respond to the dreaminess of the lad's. Yet now she threw her arm round his neck and patted his cheek affectionately, protectingly.

"I believe you love your violin more than you do me," she whispered. "What an idea, Noel, it was for you to enlist. I always hated a deserter, but with you—it is different."

"I am free," he cried in exultation. "Not quite yet," she said, petting his cheek as if he were a child, and then opened her basket.

"Eat now," she said, "and I will tell you all I have heard. I don't think they would even bother to send out after you if it were not for Lieutenant Wynne, the adjutant. It is not as if you were a trooper in the ranks. You play the fiddle very beautifully and the cornet in the band fairly well; but, you know, an able-bodied private is worth five of you."

"Katy!"

"Not to me, dear," she whispered; "no. They would let you go, but you insulted the adjutant!"

"No."

"Well, you told him the nasty truth, which is the same thing, and you know what he is. I am afraid when he finds you missing at tattoo he will send out a detail. That is why I said you must be off at once. I have mapped out your road. You have plenty of money, but you ought to leave the violin behind."

"I couldn't," said he quietly.

"Very well," she said, "but look."

From the bottom of the basket she took out some citizen's clothes.

"Of course you won't keep to the trails," she said, "but even on the plain until you reach the railroad you must not wear the uniform."

"You are my angel," he said. "I never thought of it. I just wished to go away, to be alone with the violin, far from those—those fellows—to be free."

"I know, dear," she said sympathetically—"I know. The army is no place for you. Now you must be off."

"Katy," he said, "couldn't you come, too—now, I mean?"

She shook her head and laughed.

"When you are settled down, wherever it is, write, and I will come. I promise, Noel."

"My dearest, it won't be long."

Before the last note of taps had died sadly away in the hills there was silent bustle at the stables. Sleepy and growling men were throwing the saddles on the horses and leading them out until half a troop was formed. As they came Corporal Healy turned to the sergeant in charge.

"An' what the devil's eatin' the adjutant now, sergeant?" he asked, with a yawn.

"Deserter," said the sergeant briefly—"Faval of the band."

Healy swore gently.

"A bandsman, the wee man that plays the fiddle! Is it him we're makin' all this fuss about? Begab an' begob, there's been ten good men taken a walk in the year, an' we let 'em go, an' now we're after a half built man, a fiddler, when the blankets is hungry fur us. Let him go."

"So say I," said the sergeant sullenly. "Prepare to mount! Mount! Right by twos, march! No talking!"

They left the post and silently trotted down the road to the creek. There they advanced by files and crossed to the island. One by one they disappeared in the shadows of the scrub oaks.

"Katy, Katy," said the deserter, "I am free, yet not free. Until you come to me my heart must still be in the post with you."

He had eaten, had been in the thicket and changed his clothes had received his last instructions from the girl on the road he should go, and now they were standing again in the moonlight, and his arms were round her.

They stayed a little while yet, and from across the creek came the hoarse voices of the sentries on post, "Half past 10, and all's well!"

"Now, Noel, now, you must have a good start. They won't go after you until morning, and by that time you should have bought a horse and be well on the way to the railroad. Goodbye, dear; goodbye! What? Listen! What was that?"

They separated suddenly and stood, lips apart, listening. Down the island were a crashing of leaves and a crashing of branches and the snort of a horse. The deserter's face blanched, and he threw his arms up despairingly.

"Already!" he cried. "They have suspected it already!"

The girl's face, too, was white, but she did not despair.

"Quick!" she whispered. "Make for the canyon—the mountain! Quick! They will only search the island! Quick! Quick! Fly! Oh, Noel, fly!"

He hesitated; he was bewildered.

"But where," he cried—"where is my violin?"

She took it from the rock and gave it him impatiently.

"Fly!" she said. "Oh, quick, quick, quick!"

The tramping of the horses was now distinctly heard and the command of Sergeant Holmes, "To ten yards, close distance!" The girl pushed her lover

from her, and at last he went. She turned and ran back to the creek. She sank down with a cry of despair. From the upper end of the island came the noise of more horses, of another command in another voice, that of Adjutant Wynne.

She listened breathlessly, and soon she heard a sharp challenge: "Who goes there? Halt, or you'll be fired upon! Faval?"

There was a pause, a momentary scuffle and a petulant, boyish cry of rage. Then came the officer's quiet, searching voice:

"Got him? Ah, I fancy he must be cold lying out here. Take him to the guardhouse, sergeant, where he can get warm."

The girl, white and trembling, slipped silently across the stepping stones.

"You fool," said Sergeant Holmes to his prisoner. "You should have been miles away. What made you hang around here? Do you suppose I wished to catch you?"

The unhappy musician looked up at the grim sergeant's scarred and ugly face wrathfully.

"You are farther away from her than ever now," he said.

.....

Mrs. Malone's moods were at most times uncertain, but for weeks she had been without even a temporary relapse into amiability unless indeed toward the morose and taciturn, Sergeant Holmes, Katy Malone, her daughter, and First Sergeant Malone, her husband, found it more comfortable to be out of the house as much as possible.

It was a month after the capture of Noel Faval when Mrs. Malone found herself alone with Holmes. That happened frequently. The sergeant's visits to Katy's home were the gossip of the post, for Holmes was not popular; every one knew that his face was honorably scarred by an Indian knife, but chiefly because of his gloom, his unsociability and the sudden storms of passion which convulsed him when crossed. Fifteen years in the service, he had never made a friend and, the men said, had saved the greater part of his pay. They added that his savings were the sole reason he was welcomed in the house of Mother Malone.

"She's the devil iv a darter, sergeant, so she is," said Mrs. Malone in tears, "an' ongrateful child, so she is. Luk what I've done fur her—scrapped an' saved, an' saved an' scrapped, an' sint her at last to the convict to be educated an' made a lady. It's yerself, sergeant, knows that same, sure, an' grateful is Michael Malone an' meself fur the help ye gave. We're not ongrateful, an' I'll be paid back!"

"I wish you would say nothing about it," said Holmes uneasily.

Mrs. Malone wiped her eyes and raised her finger.

"Ye 'ave been a good friend to Mike an' me an' Katy," she said, "an' niver a lad shall have the girl wid my lave save yerself, Holmes, so there, an' the wee fiddler's out iv the way anyhow. Should we be after hearin' the sintence of the court martial, sergeant?"

"The sentence? Faval? Any day now," Holmes said.

"It'll be two years fur sure," she went on, "maybe four, fur sp'akin' back to the adjutant himself. Two years in the prison at Leavenworth will give Mistress Katy time to forget him. Ye must be patient, Holmes, an' fur the bit iv money ye've lent me!"

"Hang the money!" cried Holmes, jumping to his feet. "Do you want me to wait two years for her, two years more? Have I been coming here so often for years and yet you cannot understand? Mrs. Malone, Mrs. Malone, I can't wait—I can't wait longer. Since she was a child at the post school I've loved her, and God knows that I'd give my life for her, to do the smallest thing she bid me—the smallest. She liked me once. She was learning to love me—I know it, but this—this thing, this half French fiddler bewitched her. And now you want me to wait—two years. I can't. I—I love her. I worship her. I—I'm burning up. I'm mad about her!"

He frightened Mother Malone. He dropped back in his chair, hiding his face in his hands. Tears trickled through his fingers, and his big form shook. Mrs. Malone, calloused and withered by the long struggle of years, was not yet so hardened as not to be touched by the man's naked avowal.

"Whatever the boys says, Holmes," she said softly, "an' they're an' I grunt lot iv min, ye're a good man an' a true man, an' Katy ye'll have if her mother has got a word to say."

The door burst open, and a youngster came rushing in with a shout—"little Herman of the band, son of the leader and the delight and terror of the post."

"Mother Malone," he shouted, "have you any eggs? I want six eggs with fried ham. Cut it thick. And have you any biscuits? Give us some strong coffee, too, with lots of milk, and charge it to me till pay day. Supper was rotten—mush and molasses. Hello, Sergeant Holmes!"

"Ye rat!" cried Mrs. Malone. "Six eggs, he says, an' cut the ham thick! An' him stuffed full of mush and molasses! Come here, ye wee devil, till I spank ye."

The boy was used to varied marks of affection, but he kicked vehemently as Mother Malone caught him up, lifted him high and kissed him loudly on each cheek.

"That's a nice way to behave to the men!" he cried as he was let down, rubbing his blushing cheeks. "What would Malone say if I told him?"

"Eh! Hark to him!" laughed Mother Malone as she began to crack eggs on the edge of the frying pan. "Is there any news about Faval, Herman?"

Holmes was on the threshold, passing out, but turned to listen.

"Faval? Yes, it's a shame. No wonder he ran away, with the adjutant

and the band sergeant down on him all the time, and he knows more!"

"What news?" asked Mrs. Malone impatiently, and Holmes stood waiting.

"Why, the order was read out at retreat—dishonorable discharge, forfeiting all pay and allowance and so on, and three years in Leavenworth."

"Three years in Leavenworth?" cried Mrs. Malone—"three years! Well, well! Did ye hear that, Sergeant Holmes? There's many a thing will be forgotten in three years, Holmes."

But Holmes was already striding away through the gathering dusk.

Holmes turned his back on the post and strode out across the bluffs toward the river. For a long, long time now he had been used to taking these solitary evening walks, rain or shine, to tire out the passion in his breast. Scarred, alone in the world since he remembered anything, he had never loved a living thing until now, and, having loved with all the might of a rushing, long suppressed flood, he found he had dashed himself against a rock. He had tonight but one clear thought in his throbbing head. Noel Faval was out of the way—out of the way! The words sang in his ears. It gave him a chance. For the slim lad Faval he had nothing but contemptuous pity. He was out of the way. His bewitching music, his big brown eyes, his slender, graceful form, would be heard and seen no more. That fancy would be forgotten, and he (Holmes) would have another chance. So mused the sergeant, and the devil of bitterness gradually gave place to the angel of hope, and at last by the bank of the river he came upon the girl. She was lying in the grass, her face buried in her arms, her black hair loose and her whole form shaken with great sobs. Holmes dropped on one knee beside her and dared, in his agitation, to lay his hand on her head.

"Katy!" he said. "Katy, dear!"

She sprang up. Her great black eyes gleamed angrily on him. She clinched her hands.

"What do you want here?" she sobbed. "Can't you leave me alone? I hate you! It is you who did this!"

He hung his head passively and quivered.

"What have I done to make you hate me, Katy?" he slowly whispered. "You didn't use to before—Faval came."

"And you arrested him!"

"Why did not the fool go away at once? What could I do? I was detailed. It was my duty."

"And now they have sentenced him to three years—him! He will die in the prison with those wretches; he will have no music, nothing. It is horrible! You have killed him, killed that boy!"

"Do you love him so much?"

The girl flushed in the starlight.

"What is that to you? I pity him."

A flash of renewed hope sprang from his heart to his eyes. Pity need not be love. For a moment his sight grew dim, and the next he was at her feet, clutching her dress.

"Katy," he cried, "it is done! It was his own fault. Forget him. He cannot have learned to love you as I have loved you for years. Listen, listen! Don't go away!"

The girl was in vain struggling to release her dress, frightened now.

"I am—all the men say I am, perhaps," he cried, "surly and all that, but—listen—you are the cause. For love of you and thinking of you I keep alone. From the horror of losing you I am sometimes half mad. Listen to me now and tell me: Will ever any man love you as I love? Will any one do for you what I would do?"

"Leave me, leave me!" she cried, but he clung to her.

"I cannot charm you and bewitch you with a pretty face and music, like Faval," he went on, unheeding her. "But I am a man and a true man. I claim that. Try me. Tell me what to do to prove how much I love you. Whatever it is I shall do it."

The girl's thoughts all the evening had dwelt on one thing alone—her bewildered, anxious, wild thoughts. They were yet in her mind, and now they formed themselves, as at a word of command, into a resolve. She whispered to the man at her feet:

"Do you love me so much?"

"I cannot tell how much."

"And you would do all you say for me, for love of me?"

"Anything," he cried, rising in a passion of hope and seizing her hands.

"Save him!" she cried.

.....

[TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.]

Quick Arrest.

J. A. Gullepe of Verbena, Ala., was twice in the hospital from a severe case of piles causing 24 tumors. After doctors and all remedies failed, Bucklen's Arnica Salve quickly arrested further inflammation and cured him. It conquers aches and kills pain. 25c. at Longwell Bros., druggists.

Man's Mission on Earth

As set forth in THE GOLD MEDAL PRIZE TREASURE, the best Medical Work of this or any age, entitled

The Science of Life, or Self-Preservation.

Library Edition, Full Gilt, 370 pp., with Engravings and Prescriptions, only \$1, by mail, sealed in plain package.

It is a treasure for EVERY MAN, Young, Middle-Aged and Old. Write for it today. The secret key to Health, Happiness, Vigorous MANHOOD and hale old age. Address

The Peabody Medical Institute, No. 4 Building St., opposite Bevere House, Boston, Mass., the oldest and best in this country, established in 1860. Author and Editor for more than Thirty Years chief Consulting Physician to the Institute, graduate of Harvard Medical College, class 1894. Consultation by letter or in person, 9 to 6. Supply, 10 to 1.

Know Thyself Manual, a Valuable Medical Brochure, FREE, sealed inclose 4 cents for postage. Treatise on Exhausted Vitality.

EDITOR'S NOTE For 40 years the Peabody Medical Institute has been a fixed fact, and it will remain so. It is as standard as American gold.

The Peabody Medical Institute has many imitators, but no equals.—Boston Herald.

Can't Make Him Take a Bath.

Lansing, Mich., May 26.—The health board of the village of Dansville has made an order, prepared by Prosecutor McArthur, prohibiting George H. Wright, the hermit of the village, from appearing in public places or drinking at the public fountain. The old man is afflicted with a cancer, and allows so much filth to accumulate about him that a delegation of citizens came to this city a few days ago to implore the aid of the state in compelling him to take a bath. Confronted by the emergency presented, Michigan found herself powerless. Prosecutor McArthur is not too confident that his order will have the desired effect. He says he has found no statute making bathing mandatory. The courts may be called upon to settle the matter, as Wright has ignored all protests against his contumacy.

Blood Enrages a Dog.

Northville, Mich., May 26.—A savage bulldog, belonging to the family, attacked Miss Myrtle Crampton, tore a gash in her lip, and finally bit her ankle severely when Mrs. Crampton dragged the animal away from the girl's throat. Mrs. Crampton was bitten in the hand in defending the girl, who fainted. The cause of the attack was that Miss Crampton forgot to speak to the dog as she entered the kitchen for water for a nose bleed. Attracted by the scent of blood, and taking her for a stranger, he leaped upon her and bore her to the floor.

Over-Work Weakens Your Kidneys.

Unhealthy Kidneys Make Impure Blood.

All the blood in your body passes through your kidneys once every three minutes.

The kidneys are your blood purifiers. They filter out the waste or impurities in the blood. If they are sick or out of order, they fail to do their work.

Pains, aches and rheumatism come from excess of uric acid in the blood, due to neglected kidney trouble.

Kidney trouble causes quick or unsteady heart beats, and makes one feel as though they had heart trouble, because the heart is over-working in pumping thick, kidney-poisoned blood through veins and arteries.

It used to be considered that only urinary troubles were to be traced to the kidneys, but now modern science proves that nearly all constitutional diseases have their beginning in kidney trouble.

If you are sick you can make no mistake by first doctoring your kidneys. The mild and extraordinary effect of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, the great kidney remedy is soon realized. It stands the highest for its wonderful cures of the most distressing cases and is sold on its merits by all druggists in fifty-cent and one-dollar sizes.

You may have a sample bottle by mail. Home of Swamp-Root, free also pamphlet telling you how to find out if you have kidney or bladder trouble. Mention this paper when writing Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y.

Don't make any mistake, but remember the name, Swamp-Root. Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, and the address, Binghamton, N. Y., on every bottle.

LIVER TROUBLES

"I find Thedford's Black-Draught a good medicine for liver disease. It cured my son after he had spent \$100 with doctors. It is all the medicine I take."